



# “Open the Door and Let ‘Em In”

*Someone’s knocking at the door  
Somebody’s ringing the bell  
Someone’s knocking at the door  
Somebody’s ringing the bell  
Do me a favor, open the door and let ‘em in*  
—Paul McCartney

After ten years of maintaining a school library Web site of which I was pretty proud, it struck me that it was time to rethink ownership.

Here’s what I know: Teens who create or collaborate on online spaces are more likely to feel welcome living on them. I see that on my students’ **MySpace**, **Facebook**, and **Flickr** accounts.

It makes great sense in a world where learners are used to creating and not merely consuming Web content, as documented by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, “Teen Content Creators and Consumers” ([http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/166/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/166/report_display.asp)). Way back in 2005, the report concluded:

*American teenagers today are utilizing the interactive capabilities of the Internet as they create and share their own media creations. Fully half of all teens and 57 percent of teens who use the Internet could be considered Content Creators. They have created a blog or Webpage, posted original artwork, photography, stories, or videos online or remixed online content into their own new creations.*

So what happens when you open the door and let them in?

It’s clearly time to open the school library doors. Opportunities are ripe. On the most basic level, librarians can easily create galleries of student art/work or document library activities using tools like **Flickr**



(<http://www.flickr.com>). I asked several students to collaborate in creating a school clip art gallery (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/springfieldtownship>). Our curator, Steve, is getting our yearbook photographers to contribute their shots. We have yet to attribute credit and assign labels, but Steve tells me that he's on top of it. Chris, our Art Gallery curator (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/45367058@N00>), plans to add many more examples of student work, improve the shots I took, and encourage artist reflection as time nears for our spring art show.

You can view a steadily growing archive of videos in our new **SpringfieldVideoBlog** (<http://springfieldvideo.edublogs.org>). This work is a collaboration involving the library, classroom teachers, and our video production teacher.



Our students contribute to the learning culture by creating their own learning objects through streamed video or podcasts. We now have a grammar and an information literacy series. Students are also working with me to create book trailers for our reading list titles. Teachers pull these videos up for just-in-time instruction. I use them regularly. And as I wander, I see students viewing their own videos here in the library. Some pull them up just to show their friends.

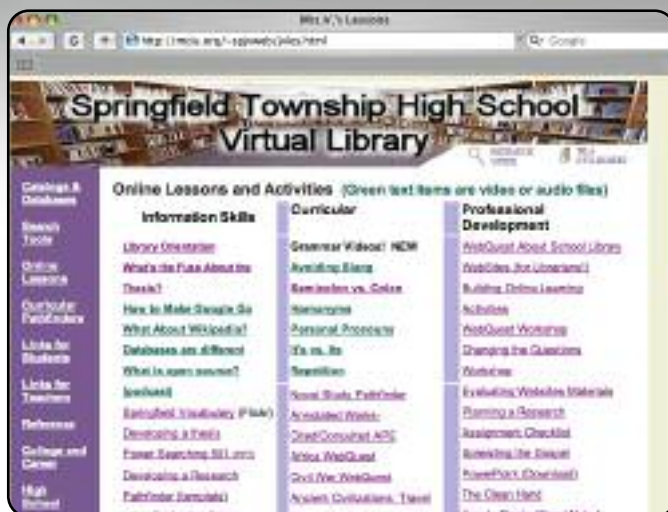
Students (mostly Ben) recently wrote and produced our new orientation video (<http://springfieldvideo.edublogs.org/taxonomy/tags/information-skills/orientation>). The library site also now regularly hosts our latest Springfield broadcast news production. Last month's show (<http://springfieldvideo.edublogs.org/taxonomy/tags/springfield-news>) was particularly filled with honesty and humor.

Much more video is coming. The students are working on seven more productions for our grammar series. And I am learning how to convert them to Flash. (They'll open far more quickly once I get that straight.)

Podcasts are coming, too. Martin posted one on Open Source that we need to tighten a bit. He is also helping me to put my own podcasts together for the site.

We are moving our senior seminar projects to blogs to encourage reflection and make peer and faculty interventions more transparent. You can view examples of our curricular blogs and wikis on our online lessons page (<http://mciu.org/~spjvweb/jvles.html>). I am beginning to migrate our pathfinders from html to wiki form to encourage student participation. I want to include student discoveries and suggestions for resources.

I am inspired by the discoveries I make as I visit other school library Web sites. Northfield Mount Hermon's **Reading Room** blog (<http://nmhlibrary.typepad.com>) is all about student users and reaches



way beyond student research needs to celebrate the whole learner, the whole TEEN. It celebrates and includes its student musicians, its student poets, its workers, its readers, and its lounge lizards.

Pam Allan, Associate Director of Academic and Library Resources at Northfield Mount Hermon, says of the student involvement, "Some of it was intentional; some of it was discovery. It's a continuing experiment. We knew our library's Web site had a different mission and audience from the larger school's Web site."

Northfield's traditional site (<http://www.nmhschool.org/nmhlibrary/index.php>) is clearly effective but fairly serious and curricular. Allan notes that the library's mission is to serve students and help them with their research. "We spent a lot of time creating a professional Web site that the school could be proud of, but something was missing, something that would reflect the atmosphere of our library. It's a kid-centered library. There's a lot of work going on. There's also a lot of fun going on."

The **Reading Room** blog (<http://nmhlibrary.typepad.com>) is clearly a student-centered, friendly space. Allan likes its dual purpose. She sees her work, off- and online, as a kind of *guerilla* activity. "Isn't it the nature of librarians to think of learning as fun? Mixing humor and fun with research is what we're all about in the library on the Web site."



Allan started with her Lounge Lizards ([http://nmhlibrary.typepad.com/the\\_reading\\_room/lounge\\_lizard\\_archives/index.html](http://nmhlibrary.typepad.com/the_reading_room/lounge_lizard_archives/index.html)), the regulars who show up every day. "The library is their home base. We started taking pictures of them and getting quotes. Then I handed the camera to our student workers, who liked doing it. And they got different kinds of quotes. Now the students do it all. They download



the photos; they get the blog entry ready as a draft. I just post it.” Allan notes that the Lounge Lizard area has become so popular that kids now just come in and say, “Hey, I’ve never been Lounge Lizard of the Week!”

Northfield’s Acoustic Friday ([http://nmhlibrary.typepad.com/the\\_reading\\_room/acoustic\\_fridays/index.html](http://nmhlibrary.typepad.com/the_reading_room/acoustic_fridays/index.html)) started a couple years ago. Allan noticed students sitting outside the library with their guitars—“just some low-key musicians playing for their friends.” When the weather got cold, she looked for a good time to let them in. “We close at five on Fridays and so we decided to invite them to play during the quiet time between four and five.” Allan promoted these events on the Web site. The school’s Webmaster asked about recording them. Now students film and record Acoustic Friday performances and the Webmaster posts them as podcasts.

Posts in Northfield’s blog feature student reviews of books, CDs, and DVDs. Sometimes the students read the books. Sometimes Allan just asks students “to go to the new books rack and try to find the book they’d most like to read if they had the time. We advertise these reviews through e-mail. We want the students to say, ‘Look at what so-and-so is reading or wants to read.’ Students may be more likely to check out what another kid is reading.”

Northfield posts photos and profiles of its Library Workjob Crew ([http://nmhlibrary.typepad.com/photos/library\\_workjob\\_0506/index.html](http://nmhlibrary.typepad.com/photos/library_workjob_0506/index.html)). “We ask them to say something they’d like the school to know about them or their work in the library.” The site includes student art exhibits as well as winning entries from its yearly poetry contest, a blog-promoted event. Winners of the library’s “very silly” Hoggens in Literature Diorama Contest ([http://nmhlibrary.typepad.com/the\\_reading\\_room/contest/index.html](http://nmhlibrary.typepad.com/the_reading_room/contest/index.html)) are also featured.

Allan plans to increase student participation. Northfield students are currently involved in helping her to create an online research tutorial. She is planning a student column on the blog and she hopes to post images of an upcoming ALA-inspired contest. Keep an eye on the **Reading Room** blog for the results of Northfield’s Pimp Your Bookcart Contest.

At the Runkle School in Brookline, Massachusetts, librarian Teresa Gallo-Toth and Educational Technology Specialist Elizabeth B. Davis collaborate with classroom teachers to post student book review podcasts (<http://www.runkle.org/Podcasts/index.html>). Right now, you can listen to book reviews by second, seventh, and eighth graders. But Gallo-Toth and Davis plan to engage the entire K–8 school. Davis says, “The first graders are almost done, and third graders are starting soon. I am hoping that this will become a resource for students looking for a good book. Eventually we want to accept podcasts from other students and teachers—not just at our school—and post them to our site.”



In New York state, Greece Athena Media Center’s Web site (<http://www.greece.k12.ny.us/ath/library>) features student book reviews and ratings on its supplementary **Athena Blogs!** (<http://www.greece.k12.ny.us/ath/library/blogs/index.htm>). At University Laboratory High School (Uni) in Urbana, Illinois, students participate in a long-running Book Discussion Forum (<https://www.uni.uiuc.edu/bbs/viewforum.php?f=5>). Uni librarian Frances Jacobson Harris fills her own **Gargoyles Loose in the Library** blog (<http://www.uni.uiuc.edu/library/blog/index.html>) with images of and stories about her students. Naples High School Media Center in Florida also features images of learners as well as student poems, photos, and art (<http://www.collier.k12.fl.us/nhs/lmc>). Lawrence High School Library in Kansas has a site (<http://library.lhs.usd497.org/home.html>) filled with posters featuring students and photos of student events. The LHS blog (<http://lawrencehighschoollibrary.blogspot.com>) posts student reviews.



So where does all this school library door opening fit in with larger educational trends? Despite moves to prevent student access to social networking tools (the Deleting Online Predators Act or DOPA, for instance), other evidence endorses trends towards engaging learners in interactive online space. SchoolSpan, an organization specializing in school public relations, recently proposed a national rubric for school sites, “Building Blocks to Electronic Communication” (<http://fetc.jsinc.com/release-exh/SchoolSpanRubricFETC.pdf>). The rubric values contributions from faculty and students, images of students, and the inclusion of student work. The instrument’s description of an exemplary site concludes with this statement: “The community-at-large feels empowered as active stakeholders . . . the site reflects that ongoing communication objective.”

All this interaction makes great sense in a Web 2.0 world. It puts front and center the kind of learning highlighted in the recently released NETS Refreshed (National Educational Technology Standards) draft ([http://www.iste.org/Template.cfm?Section=NETS\\_Refresh\\_Forum\\_Meetings&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=16084&MicrositeID=0](http://www.iste.org/Template.cfm?Section=NETS_Refresh_Forum_Meetings&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=16084&MicrositeID=0)). The revised technology standards encourage learning based on Creativity and Innovation; Communication and Collaboration; Research and Information Retrieval; Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, Decision Making; and Digital Citizenship.

Should we lock learners and their creativity out of the very spaces where they spend the largest part of their days? I think it’s time to open our doors and let ’em in. ■

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